

The Christian Manual: Study 14, Romans 11

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: Where are the ancient Egyptians, or the Incas, or the ancient Mesopotamians? Where are the Canaanites? The only ancient people who survived are the Jews. Why? They are God's people with a special part to play in His plan. They are our bothers.

The Jewish Fate

Section 1: Romans 11:1-10 Why Israel Fell

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: ³"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and

they are trying to kill me"? ⁴And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

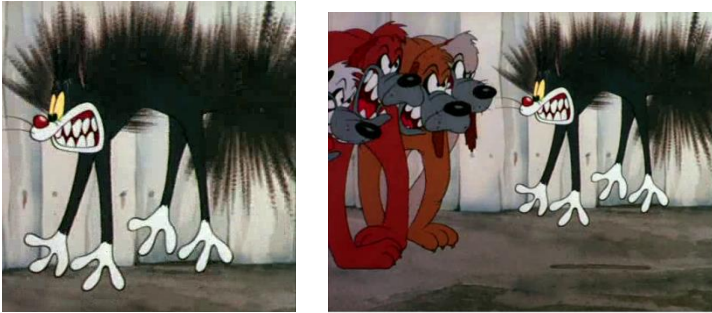
⁷What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, ⁸as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that could not see
and ears that could not hear,
to this very day."

⁹And David says:

"May their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.
¹⁰May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever."

Sometimes we need to step back and look at a bigger picture to understand what is going on.



Notice the difference between these two pictures. The one on the right makes more sense. When we pull back and look at the whole picture, we gain understanding.

Paul is doing that here. When he is close up, it looks like God has rejected the very people he chose. It looks like He has walked away from the promises He made to Abraham. This is a good lesson for us. We can look down on the Jewish people. We can develop the attitude that we are superior to the Jews, that they blew it and are just stupid. We can even develop anti-Semitism.

But when Paul takes a step back, he sees a more complete picture. Why did God harden the hearts of the Jews? What would have happened had they not been hardened? The hardening of the majority of the Jews against Jesus caused His death and resurrection. Their rejection of salvation through Jesus opened the gospel to the Gentiles, in other words, to all mankind. This fulfilled another whole set of Scriptures that God would offer salvation to all men. Isaiah 49:6 says, “You will do more than restore the

people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

God did not reject His people outright. There were some who responded to the gospel. Paul is an example. The foundation of the early church was from the Jews who were saved (see Acts 2-4). But there were more who rejected Christ.

Digging Deeper: What does it mean that the Jews were hardened? Did God force them not to believe? How can they be held accountable if God made them not believe?

We have a great example of God hardening a heart. It is the Pharaoh who would not let Israel go. In his case, the hardening of his heart by God came after he had hardened his own heart many times (see Exodus 7:22, 8:15, 19, 32, 9:6, 34-35). After repeatedly hardening his own heart, God then hardened it (Exodus 9:12, 10:20, 27, 11:10).

God does not just arbitrarily pick some people to save and some to damn. He does not harden people who have not hardened themselves. So, the answer to the question, Is God sovereign over all? Is yes. The answer to the question, Is man fully free to make decisions? Is also yes. To fully understand this, we would have to be on par with God.

Section 2: Romans 11:11-24 Grafted Branches

¹¹Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹²But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

¹³I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry ¹⁴in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not

support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

²²Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. ²³And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

This section hinges on one phrase in verse 12: Full inclusion. This word means completely filled. Paul looks forward to a day when all Israel will be included in God's family. If their rejection has meant riches to the Gentiles, how much better when they are brought back into the family of God?

Why is Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles? The Gentiles have come in to make the Jewish people jealous of the Gentile's relationship with God. Paul is proud to be a part of this ministry.

So what are we to think of the Jewish people? We are to look at them as brothers and sisters. Their God is our God. They do not know Christ, as of yet, but God will keep His promise to them and they will have full inclusion—they will be fully included. Our spiritual family is bigger than we might have realized.

There is an old poem, author unknown:

How odd of God
To choose the Jew
But not as odd
As those who choose
The Jewish God
And hate the Jews

We must not hate God's chosen people, our brothers. Consider the image in the book of Revelation:

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

Revelation 21:12

At the end of time, when God's heavenly city comes down, the gates of it are the Apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel. In the end, we will be one.

Section 3: Romans 11:25-36 Israel's Future

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

²⁷And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”

²⁸As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. ³²For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Doxology

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

³⁴ “Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

There are several mysteries in the New Testament. The Apostles were given the mysteries of the Kingdom of God by Jesus (Matthew 13:11). The Gospel was hidden (Romans 16:25, Ephesians 1:9, etc., Colossians 1:26-27). Paul taught God’s wisdom in a mystery (1 Corinthians 2:7). People speaking in tongues speak mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2). There is the mystery of our transformation when Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15:51). There is a mystery of iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:7), and the mystery of Godliness (1 Timothy 3:16). Lastly, there are many mysteries in the Book of Revelation.

Here we have another mystery. That God has hardened His people to the gospel so that the Gentiles could be saved. But the Jews will all be saved.

And so the Jews serve in two conflicting roles: As far as the gospel goes, the call of the Messiah to salvation, they are enemies who try to thwart God’s call at every turn. But, as far as election (God’s appointment) and God’s call are concerned, they are our brothers.

Paul ends with a doxology, a worshipful expression. These realities are so amazing to him that he cannot help but marvel at God’s plans. We should join him.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Being a Christian means mind change. It means thinking according to the new realities that are true of us in Christ. This requires discipline and washing our minds continuously in the Word of God. The Christian is a member of a much bigger reality.

One aspect of this reality is the Jewish people. God began the plan of salvation, the mystery hidden from creation, with Abraham. He called Abraham out of Ur and led him to trust Him, to the point where Abraham laid down the child of promise. Through Isaac came the twelve tribes. Through Levi came Moses who was used by God to bring His people the commandments and to build the tabernacle where God would live among His people. Through Judah came David and Solomon, who built the temple, again, for God to dwell with His people. Through this line came Jesus. We need to always remember, Jesus was Jewish. Christianity itself was born from Judaism. It is the fulfillment of the promises that God made to the Jewish people through His prophets.

Those of us who are non-Jews, who are saved by faith, need to always have an attitude of thankfulness and appreciation for the Jewish people. They are God's people by election. We have been grafted into their story, become brothers and sisters with them.

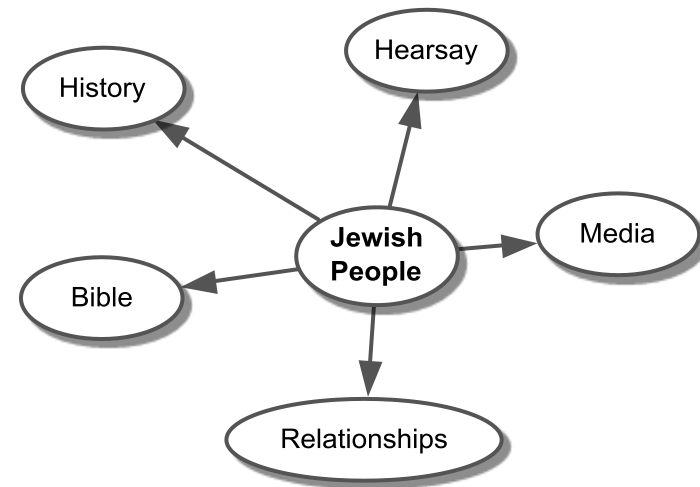
In the fulfillment of all things, we will lift hands side-by-side with our brothers and sisters in Judaism. It will be well for us to develop this love and appreciation for them now. As Paul said, how great will their inclusion be when all God's promises to them are completely fulfilled.



CONNECT: Icebreaker

Have students write down everything they know about Jewish people. They can do a Bubble Map like the one following. They write Jewish People in the center circle and list everything they know in the circles around it.

Afterwards, have the students get into groups and discuss what they came up with. Have them determine their overall feeling towards Jewish people. Ask them to look back at their Bubble Maps and determine why they feel this way.





WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 11:1-10

There are now two parts to Israel—those who have become Christians and those who have been hardened. Those who became Christians formed the nucleus of the church. They were those who saw the promises of the Scriptures fulfilled. They met their Messiah. They were filled with the Spirit of God. They have a completed faith.

Those who rejected Jesus are the enemies of God. Just read the sermon Stephen preached in Acts 6-7. In his recounting of Jewish history there were always Jews who fought against God's will. This second group is in their line.

Section 2 Romans 11:11-24

And here we get the purpose for this hardening—that the Gentiles would be saved. If the Jews had remained faithful, then Christianity would have been a Jewish religion. God's promise was to the whole world. The only way to extend grace to all humanity was for the Jews to reject it and for God to offer it to the Gentiles.

Section 3 Romans 11:25-36

Paul brings this entire section to a climax—the glorious news that all of Israel would be saved. That when the Gentile number is full, according to God's will, then the Jews will come back into the fold where they belong. The Jewish people are our brothers. Even though they reject salvation now, they will be in the Kingdom, according to God's sovereign will.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 11:1-10

1. What are the two divisions of the Jewish people?
2. How does Paul's experience prove that God has not rejected His people?
3. How does the Scripture prove that God doesn't reject His people?
4. Is it like God to call the Jewish people to Himself just to cast them out?

Section 2 Read Romans 11:11-24

1. What was God's higher purpose in having the Jewish people reject Him?
2. How does it feel to know that the rejection by the Jews was what opened up the way for you to be saved? How does this make you feel toward the Jews? How does it make you feel toward God?

Section 3 Read Romans 11:25-36

1. What is the mystery Paul talks about?
2. What will the end of the Jewish people be? Read Revelation 21:12. What does this tell us about the coming Kingdom of God? How should this affect our feelings toward the Jewish people?
3. How well do you know the Old Testament? Do you think of it as your story? Do you think of yourself as a person who has been grafted into God's people, as part of the salvation story that began with the Jews and ends with the Jews?



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

For some reason, Christians have often not known exactly what to think about the Jewish people. Some see them as those who killed the Christ and have rejected Him for the last two centuries. Some see them as people with odd ceremonies and foreign songs and rituals.

Edith Schaeffer wrote a book to Christians called, *Christianity is Jewish*. The book was a plea to Christians to understand and accept God's view of His people and their ultimate restoration—to embrace them.

God is God. He is completely in control of all history. He is sovereign. He has orchestrated all of history to bring about the greatest number of faithful worshippers. From eternity He planned everything to bring about the greatest revelation of His character and glory. One of these mysteries was the hardening of the Jews to bring about the inclusion of the Gentiles into Christ. Remember, the gospel was first offered to the Jews, but they rejected it. Afterwards, Paul went to the Gentiles.

Thinking over these things brings us to a new awe for God. He has planned for all eternity to allow us into His glorious Kingdom. He has welcomed us alongside the Jews. We are now permitted to know Him, to worship Him, and to call Him our Father. We are His children born of His seed. Jesus is our Messiah.

Let's pray heartily for our Jewish brothers and sisters and anxiously await the day when we will unite with them in the glorious Kingdom of our common Father.